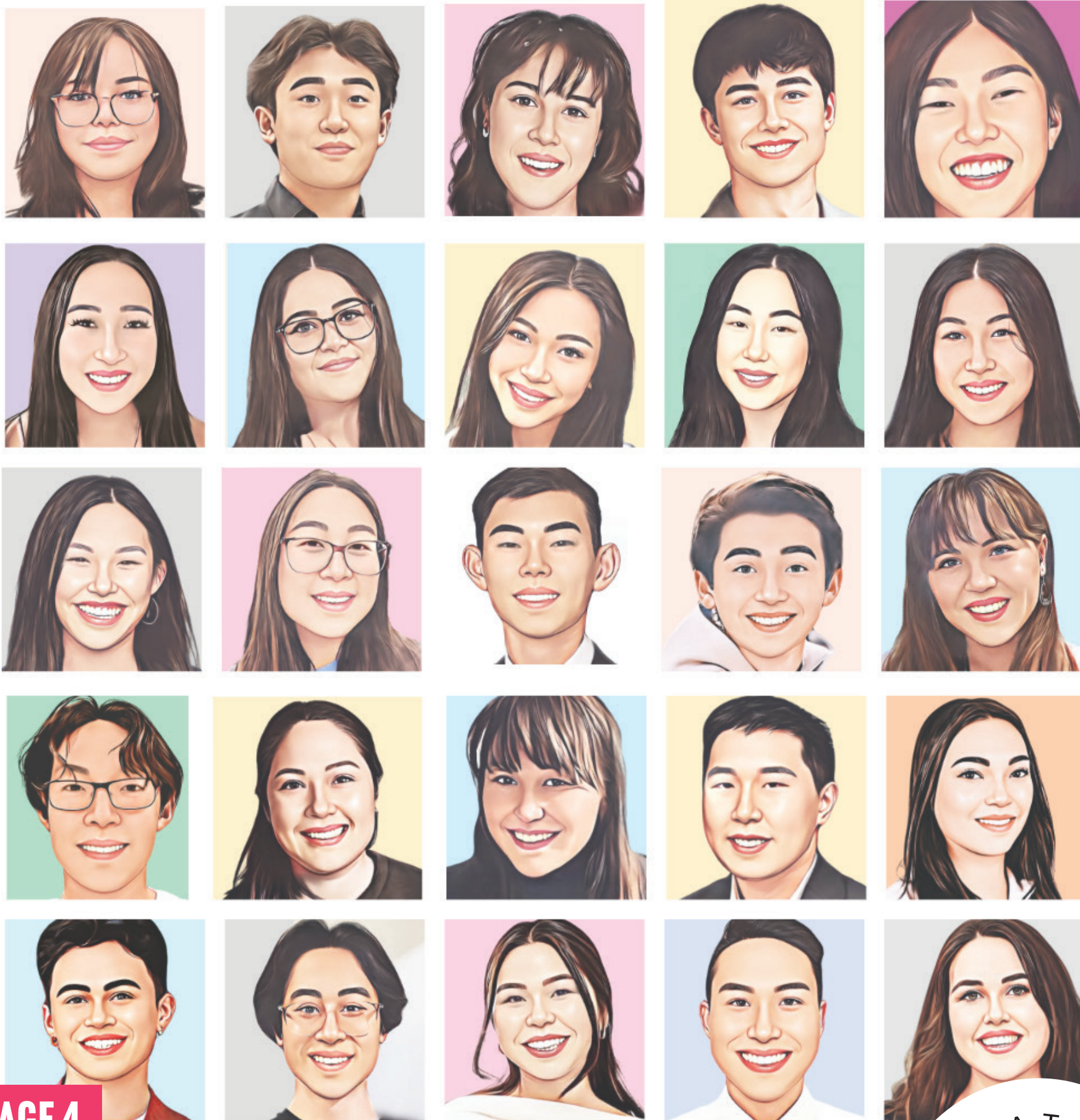


# PACIFIC CITIZEN



» PAGE 4

**2024 JAACL NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP ISSUE**

FRESHMEN  
UNDERGRADUATE  
GRADUATE  
CREATIVE ARTS  
LAW | STUDENT AID





# NATIONAL JACL 2024 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

By David and Carol Kawamoto

In so many ways, the JACL is an organization of volunteers. It is the hard work of our organization's many volunteers that leads to the continued success of our programs. The scholarship program is fortunate to have district committees that take on the responsibility of evaluating the many qualified applicants.

In 2024, a committee from the JACL's Eastern District evaluated the Freshmen applications. The EDC's committee was chaired by Linda Sato Adams of the Washington, D.C., chapter. The committee members and their respective chapters are Matthew Asada (Washington, D.C.), Janice Nakano Faden (Washington, D.C.), Danielle Pierce (Seabrook), Stefanie Pierce (Seabrook) and John Tobe (Washington, D.C.).

For the Undergraduate, Graduate, Law, Creative Arts and Student Aid categories, a committee from the Intermountain District reviewed the applications for 2024. The IDC's committee was chaired by Karl Endo of the Pocatello-Blackfoot chapter. The committee members and their respective chapters are Tom Koto (Salt Lake City), Katie Hirai (Boise Valley), Maki Jackson (Boise Valley), Robert Hirai (Boise Valley), Hena John (Salt Lake City), Geoff Russell (Wasatch Front North), Marion Hori (Wasatch Front North) and Janet Komoto (Snake River).

Please join us in thanking these volunteers for their excellent work on behalf of the JACL's Scholarship Program.

We would also like to express the JACL's gratitude and appreciation for the fine work of our staff mem-

bers, Education/Communications Coordinator Matthew Weisbly, Regional Director Patty Wada and Membership Database Administrator Tomiko Ismael.

And, we thank the JACL chapters for their excellent job of screening and forwarding Freshmen scholarship applications for the national competition. However, please be reminded that the other National JACL Scholarships are submitted directly to National JACL by applicants. Please inform all of your members and acquaintances of these other scholarships available to JACL members. The updated information brochure and applications for the 2025 program will be posted on the JACL's website ([www.jacl.org](http://www.jacl.org)). The 2024 information is still available on the website to provide background and requirements of the program.

In 2024, the National JACL awarded 25 scholarships totaling \$71,500. This year's application included the essay question: "The JACL and the greater Japanese American community is in need of younger generations who are willing and capable of taking on leadership roles in the community. How should JACL foster and encourage younger generations to assume responsibility for the preservation and longevity of the history, culture and community relations of Japanese Americans?" An excerpt from each scholarship recipient's response is found in this publication.

The JACL is pleased to acknowledge and reward the significant accomplishments of this year's scholarship recipients. We congratulate and thank them for their academic and community work. Their actions and accomplishments reflect well of themselves, their families and our entire community! ■



JACL Chicago congratulates our national scholarship recipients:

- Daniel Sanji
- Eli Nishimura
- Jaclyn Chiou
- Katie Hill
- Lisa Doi

JACL Chicago congratulates our chapter scholarship recipients:

- Brandon Takahashi
- Daniel Sanji
- Eli Nishimura
- Jaclyn Chiou
- Katie Hill
- Ryan Chiou



## HOW TO REACH US

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\* Your donations will help build and preserve a cohesive library of the *Pacific Citizen* to educate future generations.\*

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## 2024 SPRING CAMPAIGN

'I'm glad to see the *Pacific Citizen* growing and evolving with its website and especially LOVE the much easier-to-navigate digital archives. It's a treasure trove for JAs to learn about our community's history and for scholars and journalists looking to connect the past with the present. Thanks for the improvements, *P.C.*!'

— Gil Asakawa





FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Colleges and Affirmative Action, Not Quite the Results We Expected

By David Inoue, JACL Executive Director

For most students, the school year is well underway, with some already preparing for their first sets of exams. For many of us, we have been watching and waiting to see what the demographics of the class would look like at many of the most highly competitive schools for admissions. Slowly, this information has been trickling out.

One of the first schools to release its demographic data for the class of 2028 admissions was the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which saw a decrease of 9 percent, from 25 percent to 16 percent, of students identifying as being from underrepresented minority groups, specifically, Black, Hispanic, Native American, Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. On the other side, white students increased representation by 1 percent and Asian students by 7 percent, seemingly the beneficiaries of the change in demographics. Those who represented and supported the efforts of the Asian students who were part of the Supreme Court case immediately took a victory lap for their apparent impact on the demographics of MIT's admissions class.

But then we began to see data from other schools. At Yale, the proportion of Black students remained the same at 14 percent, Hispanic students increased 1 percent and Asian students went down 6 percent. Tufts and Amherst, arguably very similar schools in the same region, saw very different results with very little change at Tufts but a significant drop at Amherst from 24 percent to 11 percent. Duke increased from 27 percent to 28 percent.

What was most interesting for me were the results from my own alma mater, Cornell. While Hispanic enrollment dropped from 16.7 percent to 10.5 percent and Black enrollment declined from 11.7 percent to 7.7 percent, the only increase was in Asian enrollment, but at a nearly negligible change of 0.2 percent. For me, this tells a very different story from just the changes in who is being admitted, but more who is reporting their racial and ethnic information.

While the elimination of using race as a factor in admissions is problematic, it seems the further concern is that students are now choosing not to report race, which was the case at

Cornell, with an increase from 183 to 314 students not indicating their race on their application.

This is a disturbing trend in light of the Supreme Court case, which renders that question irrelevant to the admissions process. As many of these schools have financial-need blind admissions, they are also now race blind. And yet, just as it is important for students with financial need to apply for aid, schools also need the data on whom they matriculate. We cannot fully know the impact of the Supreme Court case if we don't have accurate data.

The bigger picture on admissions though is what impact will be felt throughout the college admissions process. The pool of students impacted at the eight Ivy League schools is actually fairly minimal, and most likely with their highly selective admissions processes, will still find and cultivate a diverse student body through more-detailed scrutiny of applications through the use of essays and what is often described as the more holistic view of the student candidate.

My fear is what impact this will have on admissions at larger state schools. California is one example where the consideration of race has been banned for several years, and there has been a clear stratification of where students go to school. The most highly selective UC schools have much smaller proportions of underrepresented students than the Cal State schools.

While the California schools have attempted to institute more holistic means of selecting students, they are not able to do it at the same level most private schools with smaller enrollments are able, and the cost to do such labor-intensive screenings also challenges state school budgets.

Between the uncertainties of the admissions process and the meltdowns of the financial-aid application system and layered on top of the Covid pandemic, this year's incoming student class has been through a lot. Just as we celebrate the diverse experiences and backgrounds of our own JACL scholarship recipients, we continue to hope that the college admissions process continues to evolve and capture the individuality of all the applicants to ensure their campuses fully represent the population of this country, not just those best positioned to apply to school.

## JAVA RECOGNIZES 2024 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

By Japanese American Veterans Assn.

Outstanding students applied to this year's Japanese American Veterans Assn.'s scholarship program. In all, 15 winners were chosen to receive a total of \$26,000 to aid their educational endeavors.

- **Jenna Tsuzaki** is the recipient of the \$3,000 U.S. Senator Daniel K. Inouye Memorial Scholarship. Tsuzaki, of Honolulu, Hawaii, is the granddaughter of Col. Harry Fukuhara, MIS. She is pursuing a doctor of medicine degree at the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine.
- **Kai Vu** is the winner of the \$3,000 Ishio Founder's Scholarship, which is named for JAVA's founder, the late Col. Phil Ishio, his wife, Constance, and their son, Douglas Ishio. Vu, of Seattle, Wash., is the great-grandson of George K. Yamada, MIS. He is attending the University of Washington and plans on majoring in global public health.
- **Kristin Li An Abe** is the recipient of the \$2,000 Kiyoko Tsuboi Taubkin Scholarship in honor of a longtime patron of JAVA. Abe, of Honolulu, Hawaii, is the granddaughter of Seichi Tsugawa, 442nd RCT. She is pursuing a bachelor of science degree at the University of California, Los Angeles, and aspires to work in the field of psychology.
- In addition, 12 JAVA Memorial Scholarships were awarded to graduating high school seniors, each in the amount of \$1,500.
- **Jaelyn Hamai**, a resident of Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., received a JAVA Memorial Scholarship in honor of Sadami Katahara. She is attending the University of California, San Diego, and plans on studying biology.
- **Reese Akemi Haramoto**, a resident of Whittier, Calif., is the recipient of a JAVA Memorial Scholarship in honor of Dr. Americo Bugliani and his liberator, Paul Sakamoto, 442nd RCT. She is attending the University of California, Berkeley, and plans on studying English literature and art history.
- **Eve Emiko Kamidoi**, from New Jersey, is the winner of a JAVA Memorial Scholarship in honor of Col. Virgil R. Miller, Commanding Officer of the 442nd RCT. She is attending the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and plans to study biology.
- **Taylor Malinger**, a resident of Honolulu, Hawaii, is the recipient of a JAVA Memorial Scholarship in honor of Maj. Orville Shirey, 442nd RCT, and his wife, Maud Shirey. She is attending Santa Clara University in Santa Clara, Calif. She plans on studying dance and English.
- **Kevin Nakaishi**, a resident of Arcadia, Calif., is the recipient of a JAVA Memorial Scholarship in honor of Vic and Teru Matsui. He is attending the University of California, Los Angeles, and plans on studying probusiness and premed.
- **Alexander Ninomiya**, a resident of South Pasadena, Calif., is the winner of a JAVA Memorial Scholarship in honor of Chief Warrant Officer 4 Mitsugi Kasai. He is attending Stanford University in Palo Alto, Calif., and plans to study East Asian Studies.
- **Melia Okamoto**, from Yokota Air Base, Japan, received a JAVA Memorial Scholarship in honor of Sgt. Ben Kuroki, a gunner in the U.S. Army Air Corps, 505th Bombardment Group. She is attending the University of Florida, where she plans to study physiology and



kinesiology.

- **George Pellei**, a resident of Richmond, Va., is the winner of a JAVA Memorial Scholarship in honor of past JAVA President and Korean War Veteran Robert Nakamoto. He is attending Virginia Tech and plans on studying engineering.
- **Camryn Sample**, a resident of Fort Collins, Colo., is the recipient of the Izuno Family Scholarship in honor of JAVA member and Korean War veteran Dr. Takumi Izuno, who served in the U.S. Army's 511th Military Intelligence Service. She is attending Williams College.
- **Rachel Takamiya**, a resident of Maui, Hawaii, is the recipient of a JAVA Memorial Scholarship in honor of U.S. Army Col. Jimmie Kanaya, a three-war veteran — World War II, Korea and Vietnam. She is attending Lewis & Clark College and plans to study premed and health sciences.
- **Trevor Toda**, a resident of Seal Beach, Calif., is the winner of a JAVA Memorial Scholarship in honor of Ranger Grant Jiro Hirabayashi, MIS. He is attending the University of California, San Diego, where he plans on studying chemical engineering.
- **Boston Ujimori**, a resident of Aiea, Hawaii, is the winner of the Furumoto Family Scholarship in honor of Hiroshi Hamai, sponsored by JAVA member and Vietnam veteran Tak Furumoto. He is attending California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks, Calif., and plans on studying marine biology.

JAVA extends a special thank you to its 2024 Scholarship Committee: Chair Chris DeRosa; Capt. (Dr.) Cynthia Macri, MC, USN (Ret.); LTC Robert Vokac, USA (Ret.); and Maj. Kay Izumihara, USAR.

For more information on how to apply to the 2025 JAVA Scholarship Program, visit [www.java-us.org](http://www.java-us.org).

### Mount Olympus Chapter Congratulates Alex Tokita and Noelle Howe recipients of National JACL scholarships

Alex has been a long term member of Mount Olympus Chapter and is currently serving on the IDC Board as a youth rep. He is president of the Asian Club at the University of Utah.

Noelle has served on the Board of Directors of the Mount Olympus Chapter for two years, since she was 16 years old. She is now attending Utah State University.

# 2024 JACL NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Essay Topic: This year's scholarship recipients were asked to respond to the following question:

*'The JACL and the greater Japanese American community is in need of younger generations who are willing and capable of taking on leadership roles in the community. How should JACL foster and encourage younger generations to assume responsibility for the preservation and longevity of the history, culture and community relations of Japanese Americans?'*

*Editor's Note: All student responses reflect those that were submitted to the Pacific Citizen by the respective JACL Scholarship Committees.*

## FRESHMEN

### ELENA CHAN

JACL Chapter: Eden Township  
Recipient of the Takashi & Yuriko Moriuchi Memorial Scholarship  
San Diego State University

#### Notables:

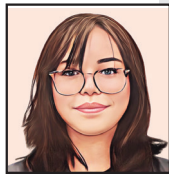
Elena Chan will be studying accounting at San Diego State University. In Eden Township, Chan participated in the Eden Athletic Club from 2014-19. She has been a part of the Junior JACL Eden Youth Group and is the current treasurer for the organization.

#### Personal Statement:

"To ensure the longevity and community relations of Japanese Americans, younger generations must take on the responsibility of cultural and historical preservation. Encouraging younger generations to assume leadership positions requires more young members to be engaged and involved in the community. This can be done by having more events, mentorship programs and volunteer opportunities. . . . Young generations must also have a feeling of community and connection to participate more actively within the JACL.

"Mentorship programs could help create stronger bonds to bridge the gap between generations. This would allow for more community relations and inspire young members to take responsibility for preserving our traditions and culture. . . .

"Students could shadow community leaders and organizers and help host different events. This would allow more hands-on experiences and promote leadership skills. It would also allow younger generations to understand more about the work older generations put into preserving our community and the history of the JACL. This could be done through youth groups or on a larger community scale, but it is important for retention of involvement to truly connect and allow younger generations to invest more time and energy."



AUSTIN ENG  
JACL Chapter: San Jose  
Recipient of the Paul & Katherine Ohtaki Memorial Scholarship  
Foothill College

#### Notables:

Austin Eng comes from a family of social activists, and he continues in these footsteps. At the 2022 JACL Convention, he joined former Congressman Mike Honda's team to work to repeal the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 — the law used to incarcerate his grandfather and other Japanese citizens during World War II. At the 2023 JACL National Convention, he was the youngest panelist to discuss Diane Fukami's new film, "What Does It Mean to Be Asian American," sharing the impact of Asian hate in his life. He was also a JACL Social Justice intern in 2023, creating a walking tour of San Jose's Japantown and telling stories of Japantown's history of racial discrimination and resilience.

He will be attending Foothill College studying communication. He is currently in the process of changing his name officially to Austin Fujii.

#### Personal Statement:

"Reaching people has always been a goal of mine, whether it is through journalism, playing taiko or supporting various causes. Through my time at the JACL as a writer, columnist, graphic designer of new marketing material, intern and convention panelist, I have immersed myself in this organization and finally felt like I found a true sense of belonging, something I think can be spread wider to reach others.

"Joining and immersing myself in the JACL was one of the best decisions I could have made to supplement the connection to my culture and the deep history behind it. No matter what the future may hold, being part of the JACL during college and beyond will allow me to be part of the youth voice in activism. As times change, being an active member of the JACL will just be a small part I can play in contributing to a future world of greater acceptance."



NOELLE HOWE  
JACL Chapter: Mount Olympus  
Recipient of the Paul & Katherine Ohtaki Memorial Scholarship  
Utah State University

#### Notables:

Noelle Howe is a lifelong Mount Olympus JACL member and has been on its board since 2022. She is a Yonsei/Gosei with many cherished memories of this JACL community. She would like to thank the Mount Olympus chapter and her parents for all they have done for her.

Howe will be attending Utah State University studying elementary education. In her recommendation letter, her teacher acknowledged Howe's strong commitment to civil rights and community service, as well as her exceptional leadership skills. Of note was her passion for education, receiving the K-12 Teaching as a Profession Pathway Award and participating in the National Educators Rising Honors Society.

#### Personal Statement:

"I was surprised, honored and intimidated when President Richard Mano invited me as a 16-year-old to join the board of the JACL Mount Olympus chapter. I had been attending JACL activities with my family for years, but I had no idea what contribution I could make as a teenage board member. At my official swearing-in ceremony, I heard myself committing to support and uphold the mission and vision of the JACL, and I realized the scope of this organization was much broader than I'd thought. Now, two years later, I know that he wasn't really inviting me to join the board because of what I could bring to the board but because of what board members and the experience could bring to me.

"He saw this as an opportunity for me to learn by observation, and he knew that by having a ground-floor view of this chapter's efforts to accomplish the stated mission of the JACL 'to promote



cultural, educational and social values and preserve the heritage and legacy of the Japanese American community.' I could begin to see beyond budgets, food assignments and membership drives. I could begin to see the higher purposes of gathering as families, friends and neighbors to establish traditions, honor our cultural heritage and remember the lessons of the past. I could experience firsthand what it is like to be mentored by seasoned leaders who bridge the age gap by fostering an environment of inclusivity and accommodation.

"I believe that 'preserving the legacy and heritage of the Japanese American community' requires the JACL to sincerely invite youth to lead, provide opportunities for mentorship and set the example of fostering environments of inclusion. But it also requires the younger generations to accept the invitation to have stewardship over the future of the JACL on the local levels, as well as become invested in the JACL at the national level."

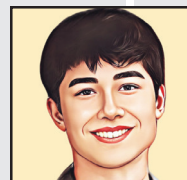
### SIMON KUTZ

JACL Chapter: Twin Cities  
Recipient of the Henry & Chiyo Kuwahara Memorial Scholarship  
Princeton University

#### Notables:

Simon Kutz is from a rural town in Iowa, fairly isolated from the Japanese American community. Two years ago, Kutz stepped up as the JACL Midwest District Youth Representative, realizing that he could make a difference for his JACL community. Since that time, he co-planned the Midwest Youth Summit and participated in the JACL/OCA Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C., allowing him to connect with Asian American advocates from across the country while lobbying Congressional offices on hate crime legislation.

Kutz's journey with the JACL has only begun. He aspires to use the skills learned from his JACL commitments to give back to the community. He



will be attending Princeton University, studying international and public affairs, where he will apply the passion for advocacy acquired from JACL to his future activities, academics and career.

#### Personal Statement:

"My commitment to the JACL as a multiracial descendant of a recent immigrant with no connection to the internment camps shows how the JACL's appeal can be incredibly broad. The Japanese American community is more diverse than ever, with many living outside of 'traditional' Japanese American population centers and/or being mixed race with recent immigration stories.

"Reaching this young, diverse and growing community is critical in expanding Japanese American community relations. By focusing significant attention on social causes that many younger individuals prioritize, including environmental, racial, queer and criminal justice, the JACL can advocate for groups that have had our backs while engaging Asian American youth.

"In addition to youth programs, preserving the JACL's commitment to history while shaping its mission for the future is crucial to bringing younger generations into the JACL. A commitment to history, especially surrounding Japanese American incarceration and redress, is incredibly critical to maintain. Since the JACL has committed to preserving the stories of those incarcerated, I have gained a deep respect and understanding for the experiences endured by community members in the not-so-distant past.

"Youth opportunities helped launch this journey for me, and by pioneering new programs, the JACL can reach an even wider youth audience. Recognizing the diversity (geographic, racial, political, etc.) of Japanese Americans will make the JACL's mission even more relevant to many younger generations, while preserving the stories of incarceration will keep the JACL grounded in a mission to root out injustice in all forms for decades to come." ➔



## Thank You for Your JACL Membership!

We're grateful to have some of the most engaged and committed members around! Because of your loyal support, we have more premium membership upgrades and generous additional gifts than ever. We're also appreciative for those who renew year after year (some for 50 years or more!) and for our increase in new members. Your dedication is essential to our ongoing mission for social justice, education, and community! Thank you! - JACL Membership Department



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**KIANNA NAKAOKA**  
**JACL Chapter: Sacramento**  
**Recipient of the Kenji Kasai Memorial Scholarship**  
*University of California, Berkeley*

**Notables:**

Kianna Nakaoka has outstanding academic talents and a motivated work ethic. Her recommendation letter shared how she challenges herself with rigorous course loads to secure the valedictorian spot in her graduating class. But her advocacy extends beyond school walls. “Kia uses her platform and influence to increase participation from underrepresented groups, setting an inspiring example of socially conscious leadership.”

She will be studying chemistry at UC Berkeley.

**Personal Statement:**

“In 2021, I joined JACL seeking more understanding of being a Gen Z Japanese American. I’m often stereotyped as a high-achieving Asian American, despite needing to work to earn straight A’s and take advanced math classes. I learned from other Japanese Americans in JACL that they, too, experienced similar pressures to be ‘perfect,’ relieved to not be the only one.

“Being both Nisei and Sansei, I am working to reconcile two different Japanese American experiences. My mother’s side is not as assimilated in America as my father’s family, so talking to my maternal grandparents is difficult, as I do not speak Japanese. I ask my paternal grandparents and parents to understand the experience of our family in the U.S., including learning about my grandparents’ experiences in internment camps and my mother’s parents’ immigration to America.

“I now try to redefine my identity, encouraging others who are not Japanese American to join me at JACL events. Furthermore, I have reconnected with my roots through JACL. . . . At JACL, I seek instead a place where I can speak candidly, amongst others who are similarly forthcoming.

“My generation often connects through social media. JACL leaders could be active on various media platforms, promoting their inclusivity and diversity. JACL should promote issues such as discrimination against minorities. By promoting such awareness, JACL would be promoting an issue many young people are passionate about.”



she decided to make a difference and became the social media manager for a newly established Eden youth group. The group hosted cultural activities such as Japanese recipe events, center cleanup dates where they helped maintain the gardens outside and events with the center’s senior citizens. This group also volunteered to clean up the Colma Japanese Cemetery, the only Japanese cemetery in the country, and learned about its history. Opening up these volunteer opportunities helped to bring in youth otherwise not involved with the center, doubling their membership that continues to grow.

She plans to study sociology at UC Berkeley.

**Personal Statement:**

“Japanese American numbers have declined, now comprising only 0.5 percent of the U.S. population. Keeping the Eden youth group going is important to me because I’m helping to establish the longevity of our community for future generations, so Japanese youth will not lose out on the special connection to our heritage.

“The memories I’ve made through social events, basketball and bazaars wouldn’t have been possible without the community center, and I’m determined to uphold these opportunities for others.

“I’ll continue to step up and develop our group’s participation so that the community we’ve built is sustained for years to come. We need to continue to uphold the traditions of Japanese American culture everywhere by ensuring the continuation of community events, as well as consistently getting youth involved.

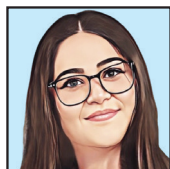
“Educating youth on Japanese American history, especially in relation to the internment camps and why the JACL was created, will help to inspire younger generations to continue the legacy and mission. Additionally, involving youth at their local JACL chapter and doing activities while getting to know the senior citizens will help build community relations, as well as increase the connection to their Japanese American culture.”

**VICTORIA WEISBLY**  
**JACL Chapter: Arizona**  
**Recipient of the CWO-4 Mitsugi Murakami Kasai Memorial Scholarship**  
*University of California, Irvine*

**Notables:**

Victoria Weisbly has been attending JACL events for as long as she can remember. Starting at the age of 6, she helped out at the Arizona Matsuri Festival JACL booth. At Gila River, where her grandfather was interned, she helped with a cleanup event sponsored by JACL. Weisbly’s recommendation letter talks about how she is a kind and caring individual who fosters a positive and inclusive environment, contributing to the overall well-being of the school community. She is not only a high achiever but also someone who values and respects the people around her.

She will be attending UC Irvine.



**Personal Statement:**

“In my opinion, the first step to encouraging younger generations to assume responsibility is to teach them about what happened. It is discriminatory that the Japanese internment camps are often not taught in school. To the education system, this disgusting event is a stain on American history that shouldn’t be shared. I had to teach my teachers about this event, and on the rare occasion that the incarceration was brought up in class, I would often have to correct them. To my recollection, I did not learn a single piece of information on this in school. It was primarily through my family and JACL. Without them, I would be left in the dark like most of the population.

“I was lucky enough to have a family that was willing to talk about and share their story. Therefore, the second step is to encourage younger generations to assume responsibility of interviewing and recording the stories of survivors willing to share, or give the people who don’t have a survivor willing to share the opportunity to hear these stories firsthand and allow them to ask questions that either the survivor themselves can answer or their family can answer. Since there were multiple camps, everyone’s experience was different.

“The last step to encouraging younger generations to assume responsibility is hosting events that everyone has access to. These events need to range from educational to interactive to fun and uplifting. The youth will never assume the responsibility for the preservation and longevity of the history, culture and community if they don’t know what happened.”

**AVERY WONG**  
**JACL Chapter: San Jose**  
**Recipient of the Sam & Florice Kuwahara Memorial Scholarship**  
*New York University*

**Notables:**

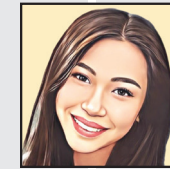
Avery Wong began her involvement with JACL during the quarantine, looking for volunteering opportunities. She began with designing activity sheets to promote mental health in her community, expanded to holiday greeting cards in different languages and continued with creating care packages for the Yu-Ai Kai members in the senior community.

Last summer, Wong was one of three interns for JACL to help redesign the walking tour of Japantown to encourage younger generations to get involved in their community. She advocated for not just multigenerational access but also multicultural access. In her recommendation letter, Wong was praised for her “rare combination of initiative, enthusiasm, determination and leadership that makes her highly effective and respected by her peers and superiors.”

She will be studying Asian American Studies at New York University. Before volunteering and working for JACL, she had trouble imagining her future self, but with these opportunities, she wants to continue having a role in community involvement and change.

**Personal Statement:**

“When I first entered my large public high school, I found it difficult to find opportunities where I could collaborate with others on my interests and hobbies.



“This is why I decided to create my own club called ‘Asian American Allies,’ and immediately, I felt a sense of community being built amongst the club members. I found that high schoolers really like to participate in areas of interest when opportunities are available to them and also when it is fun and engaging.

“Many Asian American high schoolers agree that they feel underrepresented, whether it be because of the lack of representation in history classes or the lack of connection to their culture. I grew up hearing stories about my grandma, who was born in an internment camp. Although she had shaped the way I looked at history, when I got to high school, I found that class textbooks only contained about three or four pages on the Japanese internment camps. This is why I would first like to emphasize the importance of JACL’s involvement in local schools, specifically targeting cultural clubs.

“I believe that youth involvement begins with advertising JACL opportunities to high schools and perhaps providing a ‘toolkit’ on how to collaborate with JACL resources, etc., specifically for small clubs that want to make a large impact. I think that the issue is not about getting young people to care or feel a responsibility to pass on Japanese history because hundreds of them across the country already do. It is more about creating opportunities such as volunteering, internships and activism projects that allow young adults to express their passions.”



**Eden Township JACL Chapter**

# Congratulates

## Lauren Seiji & Elena Chang

**On their National JACL Scholarship Awards!**

BEST WISHES ON YOU COLLEGE STUDIES!

**LAUREN SEIJI**  
**JACL Chapter: Eden Township**  
**Recipient of the Takashi & Yuriko Moriuchi Memorial Scholarship**  
*University of California, Berkeley*

**Notables:**

Lauren Seiji’s family has legacy connections to Eden Township: She started playing basketball for Eden because her father played in the same Japanese American basketball league when he was young. After witnessing a decline in the Eden Community Center,



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

# SAN JOSE JACL

proudly congratulates

## AUSTIN ENG, AVERY WONG, & EVELYN ZHANG

**JENNIFER YAMASHITA**  
**JACL Chapter: Venice-West Los Angeles**  
**Recipient of the Hanayagi Rokumie Memorial Scholarship**  
*University of California, Los Angeles*

**Notables:**

Jennifer Yamashita is most proud of her Girl Scout Gold Award in which she worked with the Venice Japanese American Memorial Monument and created a website to teach children about the history of the Venice-West Los Angeles Japanese American community. Included were personal stories from people like Arnold Maeda who, as a young teen, had to give up his dog when leaving for Manzanar and worked hard to create the Venice Japanese American Memorial Monument. This knowledge gave Yamashita a greater appreciation for her ancestors and the community that was created in spite of huge obstacles.

She will be studying math and computer science at UCLA.

**Personal Statement:**

“I understand there is a great need in the JA community for younger leaders. I have been very fortunate to grow up in and benefit from the close-knit JA community. I believe the first step to getting more leadership from younger generations is by educating them about the struggles and discrimination Japanese Americans faced before, during and after their incarceration and about how they built our community.”

“The JACL can foster the education of youth in the community by partnering with organizations that have existing programs to educate younger generations about the history of the JA community. For example, Kizuna has a summer camp program that includes many workshops to teach kids about JA history, traditions and culture.”

“I attended this camp as a child and more recently volunteered as a counselor. I learned about my culture and also leadership skills that could help me become a leader in the JA community.”

“What was missing, however, was learning about the JACL. I think it is important for youth to know about the JACL and its mission to advocate for our civil rights and fight prejudice. The JACL could create workshops or provide guest speakers. There are many organizations that already have a connection to JA youth, like Yo! Camp, Girl Scouts, churches and JA community centers. By using these existing networks, the JACL can educate youth and help build future leaders.”

“Another step in building a new generation of leaders is getting youth involved in the community at an early age. By becoming involved, they will form a personal connection to some of the issues in the JA community.”

“Getting more youth involved may also help bridge the gap between the older and younger generations. To get more youth involved, local JACLs could offer community service hours or internships to high school students.”

**EVELYN ZHANG**  
**JACL Chapter: San Jose**  
**Recipient of the Shigeki ‘Shake’ Ushio Memorial Scholarship**  
*University of Chicago*

**Notables:**

Evelyn Zhang had reached out to the San Jose JACL chapter with an interest to revamp the Japantown tour into one on social justice. The San Jose JACL chapter accepted her proposal and recruited her as lead intern for this project. Historians were consulted for research on local information. Tours were connected to current events, such as the Muslim Travel Ban, and sprinkled in were more light-hearted stops, like Pau Hana Shaved Ice and Shuei-Do Manju Shop, to keep a younger audience engaged while promoting local businesses. In addition, the website was updated to include a virtual tour and online brochure, which were also made available on the official JACL website. The chapter received positive feedback from past self-tour attendees.

Zhang’s recommendation letter praised her initiative, enthusiasm, determination and leadership that made her highly effective and respected by her peers and superiors on this project.

She will be attending the University of Chicago, where she plans to study political science and economics on a prelaw track.

**Personal Statement:**

“I think the JACL should create inclusive spaces — whether it entails programs or already-existing programs such as leadership youth initiatives. I found that having a supportive space within my Chinese orchestra allowed me to explore my identity, and my journalism community encouraged me to explore the hard truths, regardless of how hard it is for some to hear.”

“By doing so, the JACL can provide youth with opportunities for networking to nurture the next generation to continue standing up for a community that they feel supported by and that they have connections with. Moreover, I believe that education and awareness-building and a supportive community go hand-in-hand when encouraging youth to participate.”

“To support an activist leader, the JACL first needs to educate and introduce them to issues that youth believe are worth fighting for. Too many youth are disconnected to the struggles that their ancestors have undergone, so it is important to educate youth about these topics in fun ways, such as with workshops, publications or cultural events.”

“This past Day of Remembrance was a great example of an engaging, youth-focused, educational event — I appreciated how the Nihonmachi Outreach Committee invited Nina Chuang to speak, as I and I’m sure many other youth were inspired by her words of youth conviction and power. To take this idea one step further, I think the JACL can include diverse voices in the decision process — for instance, we could have a youth representative on the JACL board to include youth voices in large decision processes to set a foundation for a trusting relationship between older and younger generations.”

**UNDER-GRADUATE**

**JACLYN CHIOU**  
**JACL Chapter: Chicago**  
**Recipient of the Shigeru Nakahira Scholarship**  
*University of Texas at Austin*

**Notables:**

Jaclyn Chiou will be attending the University of Texas at Austin this fall getting her degree in mechanical engineering. She has been a member of her local JACL chapter for the last eight years. Chiou has participated and been involved in many activities, including the Day of Remembrance and the national conference. She has also been a part of the Kansha project, and as her culmination project, she created a 2.5-foot-long diorama of a barrack with handmade figurines depicting eight different individuals and their stories from camp.

Chiou also thinks that the JACL should offer more social events, both in person and virtually, for young JA people to connect with each other. And she is committed to carrying on the legacy of her family even after college. She would like to create an Asian American employee resource group within a company with a mission to dismantle Asian stereotypes to break through the bamboo ceiling. Additionally, she wants to continue to educate others about the JA internment camps to create awareness of the potential racism and bias that exists.

**Personal Statement:**

When asked what the JACL and the greater Japanese American community could do to help youth take on leadership roles, Chiou had several ideas. One, in particular, really resonated with her following a recent pilgrimage trip to Rowher and Jerome, where she shared time with her grandfather.

“JACL should fund projects that create educational material for classrooms about the internment camps and preserve the memories of survivors. I was deeply honored to be chosen to participate in ‘Campu: An American Story,’ which featured my grandfather’s, mother’s, mine and my younger brother’s perspective of visiting the Rohwer internment camp.”

“For ‘Campu,’ I wrote a letter to my grandfather about visiting the Rohwer internment camp and his experiences.”



I remember crying as I wrote the letter and again after I had read the letter aloud for the audio recording of it for ‘Campu’ with my grandfather in the room. I am so grateful to ‘Campu’ for creating a digital time capsule to educate others about the internment camp and preserve my grandfather’s story for future generations.

“I am profoundly honored that I was able to make a contribution to the JA community to help preserve the legacy through my participation in ‘Campu.’”

**LAUREN IWAMIYA**  
**JACL Chapter: Washington, D.C.**  
**Recipient of the Daniel & Irene Iritani Scholarship**  
*Howard University*

**Notables:**

Lauren Iwamiya has been actively involved with JACL for the past two years. She has been a D.C. chapter youth co-chair and a member of the chapter’s Membership Committee. She also has participated in the Kakehashi project and participated in the NY/SC EDC Youth Retreat, a Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival participant and volunteered for many other D.C. chapter events.

**Personal Statement:**

“I grew up in San Francisco’s Japantown — the JACL office always a block away from my preschool, afterschool program, summer camp (that I later came to work at) and high school youth leadership program. When I came to Washington, D.C., for college, I knew that being at Howard University — a historically Black college and university — would allow me to foster interracial solidarity, but I wouldn’t have the same access to the Japanese American community. . . . In D.C., I became a part of the Nikkei JACL community thanks to the high

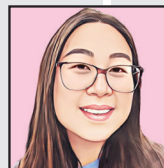
frequency of events organized by the JACL D.C. chapter and opportunities from the JACL EDC and National Board.

“In December 2023, I was asked to join the 2024 chapter board to begin the process of building a young JACL D.C. community. . . . The work that I am doing within the D.C. chapter is centered around youth and young adult empowerment through the strength of community. By building a community of young professionals within the D.C. chapter, we are able to connect young Nikkei and Asian Americans to the JACL and thus help them to become involved in activities, organizing and the civil rights mission of the JACL.”

“But for other young JACL members who do not have the same access to a larger Nikkei community in their area, or are members of a smaller-sized chapter, what can the JACL do to empower these youth in a similar way that I advocated for myself in D.C.? I think it is important to build bridges between nearby small JACL chapters and also expand outward when thinking about the JACL membership base.”

“The JACL is a civil rights organization that was originally made for Japanese Americans and centered around local community building. But JACL membership, allyship and solidarity building has never been exclusively Nikkei. . . . Instead of focusing exclusively on creating new Japanese American leaders, it is also important to recognize that the Japanese American diaspora itself is very racially diverse. We ought to focus less on racial exclusivity and more on creating understandings between different people to unite our struggles and recognize each other as different and the same.”

“At the center of leadership and creating leaders of the future is community. . . . Once we cultivate a strong community, leaders will emerge.”



JACLDC Chapter  
 Proudly Congratulates  
 2024 Scholarship Winner  
**LAUREN IWAMIYA**

**Congratulations**  
**Jaelin Mia Umeda**

**Many dream but few achieve,**  
**You did it!**  
**Love Bachan and Jichan Umeda**

strengthened by the support of their community and sense of belonging and invigorated by the complex social issues they are enriched with to create change.”

**TROY KADONAGA**  
**JACL Chapter: San Fernando Valley**  
**Recipient of the Saburo Kido**  
**Memorial Scholarship**  
*University of Southern California*

**Notables:**  
 Troy Kadonaga has been an active member of the San Fernando Valley Japanese American community for many years and has more recently become active in JACL, including attending the 2023 National Convention. He is currently interested in pursuing medicine, with particular emphasis on genetic effects on disease prevalence statistics, leading to different potential treatment and screening plans for people of different genetic backgrounds.



**Personal Statement:**  
 “Even though I’m a fifth-generation Japanese American, I’d never felt personally connected until I became an active participant in programs and events in and around the community. . . . Having greater involvement in the Japanese American community was one of the best things that could have happened to me.

“I’ve become more in touch with my Japanese roots, which I’d always felt a bit distant from. I learned valuable life skills and have had the opportunity to give back to the community that I never realized provided me with so much when I was younger. I’ve also met some incredible people and made lifelong friends. But most importantly, I found my place within the community.

“Along the way, I discovered more about the Japanese American legacy. I learned more about how my ancestors were alienated from their home country, how they were treated as enemies and prisoners and were relocated to camps like Manzanar, Tule Lake and Poston. Hearing their experiences firsthand gave me a deeper sense of history and my familial culture.

“I heard incredible stories of the Japanese American fighting spirit. They were courageous and strong and fought for their belief in their personal identity. Learning about what it truly means to be Japanese American added a sense of depth and meaning to my life. I’ve come to embrace both my Japanese ancestry and my American nationality and made them a major emphasis on my personal identity.

“I want to preserve the Japanese culture that I feel so connected with and protect the Japanese American legacy. My active presence within the community is the first step toward accomplishing this goal.”

“Getting involved within the JACL at the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center opened up a new world of connections. Being able to attend the 2023 JACL National Convention as a youth scholarship winner for my chapter has allowed me to witness the impactful activism of people from across the country. I met some incredible people from all ages and backgrounds

who believe in the purpose of the JACL and who all reflect the same fighting spirit that came to define the Japanese American legacy during World War II. Fostering participation in these efforts from the younger generations can ensure that the JACL’s mission and actions live long into the future.”

**ALEX TOKITA**  
**JACL Chapter: Mount Olympus**  
**Henry & Chiyo Kuwahara**  
**Scholarship**  
*University of Utah*

**Notables:**  
 Alex Tokita has been involved with JACL for a long time. “Coming from a family that’s been involved in JACL for decades (my grandpa, Yasuo Tokita, and my father, Robert Tokita), I’ve attended JACL events like Fund-a-Ramas and Mount Olympus picnics since I was little. Although I officially joined the JACL as a member in October of 2019, I’ve been surrounded by the JACL community my whole life, and I began to volunteer at events during my freshman year of high school. . . . I’ve regularly read through the *Pacific Citizen* digital newspapers and JACL newsletter releases, thus helping me keep up with the community as a whole and the issues we face.”



**Personal Statement:**  
 “Connection within community is an utmost \*necessity\* for youth to pursue leadership and further engagement. Without a sense of belonging or a sense of inherent connection, people lose the sense of accountability for the community’s well-being and survival.”

“First, identities are becoming multidimensional. It’s becoming rarer and rarer that the children of Japanese Americans will be \*fully\* Japanese American. The youth I know in the JA community are often half-white or quarter-white or half-Chinese or half-Korean, etc. Therefore, they hold identities that can put distance between themselves and the Japanese American community. There’s noticeably less children being brought into the JA community now than in generations past. . . . And subsequently, the children of these people are not introduced to the JA community.

“. . . Addressing the issue of multidimensional identities, the JACL must \*welcome\* a broadening of who we consider community members. We need to seek out, with open arms, those that are half-Japanese and a quarter-Japanese. We need to expand our perception of Japanese Americans to include those who don’t even \*look\* Japanese. And we need to validate their identity as equally accepted Japanese Americans.

“Lastly, youth have to be sought out. We need campaigns on a chapter level to find Japanese Americans and invite them to events. . . . We can \*give\* them greater connection to their Japanese American identity and forge connections with generations prior. It ultimately comes down to gathering as many Japanese American youth as possible, giving them space to build friendships and connecting them to the greater JACL.”

**LAUREN YANASE**  
**JACL Chapter: Portland**  
**Recipient of the Alice Yuriko Endo**  
**Scholarship**  
*Portland State University*

**Notables:**  
 Lauren Yanase will be attending Portland State University this fall, focusing on history as her major. She has been a JACL member for the last five years and was appointed to the Pacific Northwest District’s National Youth/Student Council, where she served from August-November 2022. Additionally, she posted an article on anti-Blackness in Asian American communities that she had published for *asianamericanwriting.com*.



**Personal Statement:**  
 Yanase has a broad perspective on the JACL not just focusing on the incarceration experience but also noting that there were thousands of Japanese American immigrants who never stepped foot in an incarceration camp and many more that lived full lives prior to World War II. She would like to see the JACL promote programming that supports a more whole Japanese American experience.

“Japanese American youth, and indeed all youth, crave accessibility, accountability and action-oriented methods from their institutions. Social media, while a valuable outreach and organizing tool, cannot be the sole method of appealing to younger generations. The JACL must formalize and expand opportunities for youth to get involved and demonstrate broad appeal and relevance.

“Many secondary and post-secondary schools offer credit for community service and volunteering hours. The JACL should take advantage of that institutional recognition, and offer opportunities for youth to get invested and involved with its political advocacy.

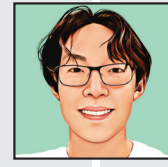
“The Portland chapter’s Connie Masuoka is a wonderful example of youth outreach and political activism in action. For many years (briefly interrupted by Covid-19), Connie has run regular meetings devoted to activism and cultural enrichment for youth to get involved at the grassroots level.

“This model of youth activism should be applied to other local JACL chapters and would surely encourage younger generations to get excited about being involved with the JACL while earning

institutional credit and recognition for their work.”

**JET YOTSUUYE**  
**JACL Chapter: Puyallup Valley**  
**Recipient of the Dr. Thomas T. Yatabe**  
**Memorial Scholarship**  
*Tufts University*

**Notables:**  
 Jet Yotsuuye has been an active member of the Tacoma Japanese American community, involved in JACL, performing as a Taiko performer and as a participating member at various levels of the Tacoma Buddhist Temple Young Buddhist Assn. and the Northwest Young Buddhist League.



He is passionate about preserving and sharing Japanese American culture and history and has taken an active role at Tufts’ Japanese Culture Club, organizing a diverse array of events such as Day of Remembrance and *udon*-making events.

**Personal Statement:**  
 “Growing up in a community where Japanese American culture and history were prevalent, I was surrounded by the stories of resilience, strength and the profound impact Japanese Americans have shown throughout history.

“Festivals, cultural events and family traditions served as constant reminders of our proud heritage. However, upon moving to the East Coast for college, I was surprised by the lack of awareness among people, including Japanese Americans, about Japanese American history, particularly the internment camps.

“This realization prompted me to take action, and I became involved in the Japanese Cultural Club on campus. Assigned as one of the leads for the Day of Remembrance event, I began to focus on researching and creating an

informative poster about the Japanese American internment camps. Drawing inspiration from personal stories shared by individuals back in my home state of Washington, I aimed to forge a personal connection between the audience and the historical narrative.

“The resulting poster not only presented the facts but also showcased the human stories behind the statistics. By incorporating narratives from individuals I had spoken to, the poster aimed to evoke empathy and understanding. When displayed, it garnered attention from diverse individuals who were previously unaware of the injustices faced by Japanese Americans during this dark period in history.

“People approached me, expressing a newfound appreciation of the struggles faced by Japanese Americans and a deepened interest in the culture and community. Many of them admitted their lack of awareness and gratitude for the enlightening perspective provided by the poster.

“This experience had a tangible impact on the Japanese Cultural Club, leading to a significant increase in its membership as individuals sought to engage more actively with the history and culture of Japanese Americans.

“The Japanese American Citizens League can play a pivotal role in fostering and encouraging younger generations to assume responsibility for the preservation and longevity of their history, culture and community relations.

“By actively engaging with communities where Japanese culture may not be as prevalent, the JACL can bridge gaps in understanding and awareness by showcasing the rich history of the Japanese American communities and their struggles.”

**Congratulations**  
**Jet Yotsuuye**  
 on being awarded National JACL’s  
 Dr. Thomas T. Yatabe Memorial  
 Scholarship  
 from Puyallup Valley JACL

**San Fernando Valley JACL Proudly**  
**Congratulates**  
**Our 2024 Scholarship Recipients**

**Troy Kadonaga**  
 SFV JACL Undergraduate Scholarship,  
 National JACL Saburo Kido  
 Undergraduate, Daniel T. Nagasawa  
 Scholar Athlete Scholarship

**Harrison Hirota**  
 SFV JACL Freshman Scholarship

**Lindsey Kadonaga**  
 SFV JACL Freshman Scholarship  
 Daniel T. Nagasawa Scholar  
 Athlete Scholarship

## GRADUATE

## LISA DOI

**JACL Chapter: Chicago**  
**Recipient of the Henry & Chiyo**  
**Kuwahara Scholarship**  
**Indiana University**

## Notables:

Lisa Doi was an original participant in the JACL Chicago chapter's Kansha Project in 2012. The Kansha Project is designed to educate young Nikkei from the Midwest about the history of the incarceration through a trip to Little Tokyo and Manzanar. She also helped facilitate the Kansha Project for JACL Chicago and worked to establish the Alumni Leadership Board for the Kansha Project to empower young JACL Chicago members with new leadership opportunities.

In 2017, the ALB grew into Next Generation Nikkei, the current young professionals' group of JACL Chicago. This was also the year Doi joined the JACL Chicago chapter board and facilitated the Kansha Project for a second time. In 2018, she became the chapter's vp and in 2019, its president. In 2021, she received the NY/SC Vision Award on behalf of Tsuru for Solidarity. Doi has worked to educate and make connections through the JACL Chicago chapter, Tsuru for Solidarity and the Japanese American National Museum.

## Personal Statement:

"In 2021, JACL Chicago focused on the 40th anniversary of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians hearings. It was a time to contemplate what the legacy of these hearings were, and it was also a time that pushed me to consider the commission's stated causes of the incarceration. They attributed the confinement to racial prejudice, wartime hysteria and a failure of political leadership.

"While this is what I've learned in my undergraduate course on Japanese American incarceration, my MA research on Japanese American resettlement to Chicago and my doctoral work on Japanese American memories of incarceration, I have begun to rethink these causes.

"One of the moves that I think the commission was required to make was to cordon off this history within a longer history of an otherwise benevolent and democratic nation. Thus, how would you make meaning of this history if you saw Japanese American incarceration not as an anomaly but rather a pattern?

"To me, this is not just an academic exercise. Although I have had robust formal education in the history and historiography of Japanese American in-

carceration at the collegiate and graduate level, I think my most valuable education has been in community."

"Taken together, I think my formal education on Japanese American history, my own academic research and writing and my roles in community organizations have given me many opportunities to learn about the history of World War II incarceration and make connections to histories of racial discrimination in the U.S., as well as contemporary experiences of racism, incarceration and detention."



**AIKO MATSUMURA DZIKOWSKI**  
**JACL Chapter: Venice-West**

**Los Angeles**  
**Recipient of the Minoru Yasui**  
**Scholarship**

**University of California, Los Angeles**

## Notables:

Before starting graduate school at the University of California, Los Angeles in fall 2022, Aiko Matsumura Dzikowski graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Smith College in 2019. She was captain of the Smith College NCAA field hockey team and was involved with Pan-Asians in Action and other athletic and activist student groups.

She has been a member of the Venice-West Los Angeles chapter for three years and was a member of the JACL National Youth/Student Council, where she served as treasurer. Dzikowski also participated in the Kansha Project. Since spring 2023, she has been very active in the Nisei Week Queen and Court Program and the Miss Western L.A. Program with its emphasis on leadership training, cultural workshops and mentorship across generations. She is fluent in Japanese and has been a language tutor and translator, in addition to spending time living in Japan with her grandmother. She used her Fulbright award to teach English in Korea for nearly two years during a Covid break.

## Personal Statement:

"As a Ph.D. student in linguistic anthropology and future educator in Japanese American studies, I am passionate about fostering and encouraging younger generations to assume responsibility for the preservation and longevity of Japanese American history, culture and community.

"Having grown up in a small town in Pennsylvania with few other Asian Americans, I learned from an early age how important it is to preserve Japanese American history, culture and community relations. My public school system barely addressed the history of World War II incarceration, and there were few



opportunities to take part in Japanese American culture and community.

"As a second- and fourth-generation Japanese American, I had longed for a sense of belonging — which I finally found through the JACL and Smith College's AAPI activist organizations. During my time with the JACL NY/SC, Kansha Project and Pan-Asians in Action, I learned the impact of facilitating educational partnerships with institutions and youth organizations. With an emphasis on Japanese American history — and on the experiences of those who were forced to assimilate into hegemonic society both then and now — I believe educating younger generations is key to preserving our community's culture and relations.

"By partnering with institutions and utilizing youth platforms in order to share the many untold stories of our community, the JACL would be able to provide for the diverse needs of the people it serves — both in predominately

Japanese American spaces and in areas such as my hometown, where there remains little to no AAPI representation.

"Now in the second year of my Ph.D. program at UCLA, I continue to feel impacted by my educational experiences through the JACL and associated youth programs. My growing knowledge of Japanese American history and culture has inspired my graduate research, which pertains to language and identity within the Japanese American community — and I aim to highlight Japanese American history and the ways in which it continues to impact our understandings and experiences of race, gender, transnationalism and its various intersections.

"Someday, I hope to share my knowledge and findings by becoming a professor of anthropology and Japanese American studies. I am committed to preserving the history, culture and com-

munity relations of Japanese Americans — and encouraging younger generations to do the same.

"... I have been heavily shaped by my experiences at Smith College and with Fulbright Korea, and I hope to advocate for human/civil rights work no matter where my career takes me. Furthermore, I am committed to decolonial movements as a result of having moved to Korea at the onset of another trade war between Korea and Japan and forced to learn about the history and horrors of Japanese colonization in ways that have forever changed my outlook on diplomatic relations and the power of language."

## MATTHEW KOJIMA

**JACL Chapter: Berkeley**  
**Recipient of the Kenji Kajiwara**  
**Scholarship**

**Boston University School of Medicine**

## Notables:

Matthew Kojima first joined the Berkeley JACL in 2020. He became interested in civil rights and social justice through his role as the Community Service and Issues chair for the Berkeley Nikkei Student Union, then became NSU's representative at Berkeley JACL board meetings. He strengthened NSU's partnership with JACL by recruiting youth members to join the Berkeley chapter by promoting its scholarship program for college students and helping to organize its email newsletter.

This collaboration led to his involvement with JACL. Kojima also helped organize young professional socials, served as the chapter's National Membership Committee representative, attended NCWNP District meetings and then became its co-president.

After getting situated at Boston Univer-

sity School of Medicine, Kojima hopes to meet people from the New England JACL chapter and find ways to get involved. He also hopes to participate at the district and national levels.

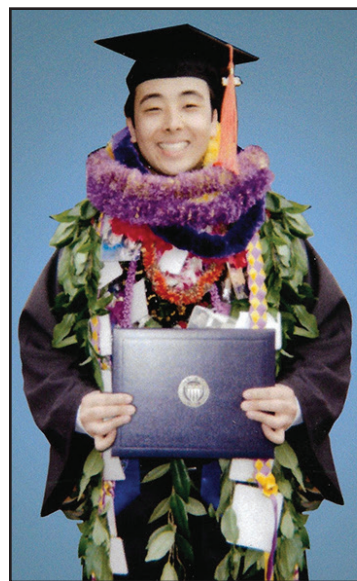
## Personal Statement:

His personal statement speaks to the lack of participating youth members, as he has noticed when attending district meetings that other JACL chapter presidents have served in their role for decades because "... there is no one to take over. Furthermore, a common concern from older members is that they are having difficulties finding ways to bring in a new generation and keep their chapters going. With this in mind, I believe that there are several things that JACL can do to improve in this area.

"First, I think that chapters should make an effort to engage with Japanese/Asian American interest groups that cater to teens, college students and young professionals ... by emphasizing the opportunities that we can offer. ... It is important for them to stay engaged and continue to be members. For this reason, we should support groups within the organization that cater specifically toward them. ... One final thing that JACL can do to bring in a younger generation of leaders who will keep our mission going is to continue our push for civil rights.

"With that being said, several of my peers have decided to step back from JACL because they feel that we have not done enough to speak up about current injustices faced by our allies. Furthermore, despite making the effort to speak to leaders in JACL, they have felt that their opinions and concerns have been ignored, which has resulted in them reducing their time commitment to our organization. As a result, they have joined other groups that are more willing to listen to them.

"Therefore, I think that we



## Congratulations Colby Ken Kudo

on your graduation!

B.S. Mechanical Engineering  
University of Washington



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the Kudo Ohana

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Gerald Fukui  
President



must be receptive to the voices of our youth and be willing to compromise and implement some of their ideas because if we turn our backs on the people who will take over as leaders of the Japanese American community, we may not survive.

“... I have no doubt that we can be an attractive organization for this next generation of youth who want to make a difference so long as we are open and ready to listen and start dialogue.”

**MARISA KIMIKO LAIRD**  
**JACL Chapter: Sacramento**  
**Recipient of the Rev. John H. & Asako Yamashita Scholarship**  
*Stanford University's Graduate School of Education*

**Notables:**  
 Marisa Laird recently graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of California, Davis, with a major in Asian American Studies. She was a member of the varsity women's gymnastics team for four years and received athletic and academic scholarships throughout college. Laird was also a member of the Japanese American Student Society and the Intergoliate Athletics Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee.



She joined JACL this year because she wanted to become more involved with the JA community and be a member of an established organization as she enters the postundergrad world.

Laird will be entering Stanford University's Graduate School of Education to earn her M.A. in teaching and multiple-subject credentials. Her grandparents were incarcerated at Tule Lake, and this family history is part of the reason she wants to pursue a career in teaching.

**Personal Statement:**

As a mixed-race Asian, Laird was not completely comfortable with her identity as a Japanese American until she “discovered Asian American Studies in college.” Her teaching assistant internship at Fred T. Korematsu Elementary School has been a real eye-opener for her and one she has truly embraced.

“Being able to recognize and apply ethnic studies concepts I learn from my courses to a kindergarten class has opened up a new world for the way I approach teaching and gives me an empathetic understanding of the students. This internship in combination with my course load sparked my interest in researching ethnic studies as a pedagogical approach to elementary curriculum.

“Between my own experience, observations and coursework, I have gathered that elementary-aged kids already have an understanding of race that is shaped by their families, friends, media and even through everyday microaggressions. Allowing only the dominant narrative to be taught in the classroom shuts communities out of American history, which becomes harmful as children realize the lack of representation in the curriculum and internalize it as ‘I don't belong to the American narrative.’

“Continuing this pattern is equivalent to a bystander silently watching someone get bullied because it is simply ‘not my problem.’ It is. Race, gender and identities that intersect must be discussed no

matter how uncomfortable it may be to do so. I believe this is becoming ever so important in California, especially as other states are passing discriminatory laws and censoring what can be taught in schools.

“It is not an equitable practice to make students wait until university-level courses for them to realize their experiences have space in the American narrative. College is a privilege that many students do not have access to, yet happens to also be the place where students are finally given the resources to understand their positionality and how that has affected their learning patterns.

“This is why I want to give my students the opportunity to learn that they love learning early on in their education through identity-based teaching practices, such as culturally responsive pedagogies, so they have a solid foundation to continue building on after elementary school. These groups of culturally and linguistically diverse students deserve more inclusive curriculums, where their range of experiences are used as an asset in the classroom, rather than a hindrance. I want to understand how to implement social justice

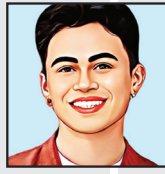
teaching practices in my classroom, regardless of which subject is being taught.

“Upon completion of my teacher preparation program, I plan on teaching in my own classroom for at least 10 years to develop my pedagogy and continue to learn from my students and through experience. At the 10-year mark, I will re-evaluate and decide if I want to pursue a doctoral degree in education.”

**DANIEL SANJI**  
**JACL Chapter: Chicago**  
**Recipient of the Dr. Newton K. (Uyesugi) Wesley Graduate Scholarship**  
*Northwestern University*

**Notables:**

Daniel Sanji intends to pursue a tenure-track professorship in psychology, where he plans to set up a social psychology laboratory investigating racial and economic inequality.



He has been active in the Chicago chapter and JACL National since 2019. Sanji also participated in the Kansha Project and visited Manzanar, where he assisted in restoring some of its campgrounds.

While studying as an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin, Sanji first became involved as a student leader, working as the director of the Asian Pacific Islander Desi American Student Center. This experience shaped much of his interest and experience in leading student groups.

**Personal Statement:**

“Each of our stories of becoming young student leaders in our respective communities involved some combination of mentorship and opportunity. As a young Gosei Japanese American and member of JACL, I strongly believe that JACL can foster and encourage younger generations of leaders to preserve the history, culture and community relations of Japanese Americans by focusing on mentorship and opportunities for their young Nikkei members.

“Specifically, I believe that JACL can create and expand existing mentorship

programs, offer leadership training and provide platforms for engagement for youth. One way that JACL can facilitate the mentorship of their younger members is to create and expand existing mentorship networks that pair young members with more-experienced leaders in the community.

“This process would contribute to the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and experience. This intergenerational transmission of knowledge and experience has been characteristic of the Japanese American community for generations.

“I strongly believe that expanding resources to intentionally foster these intergenerational mentorship relationships would benefit the organization as a whole and reflect JACL's overarching goal of preserving knowledge and history within our community.

“To further develop this intergenerational exchange of information, JACL can also contribute more resources into leadership training and workshops for younger members of the organization. Community leadership often comes with specific skills and requirements, and in my experience, I was never intentionally taught these skills in my positions — I learned as I went along.

“I believe the organization can reduce this burden on younger members by intentionally devoting resources into training and workshop programs that teach members skills within the domains of community advocacy, event planning and cultural preservation, as examples.”

**CREATIVE ARTS**

**ELIJAH NISHIMURA**  
**JACL Chapter: Chicago**  
**Recipient of the Henry & Chiyo Kuwahara Memorial Creative Arts Scholarship**  
*DePaul University*

**Notables:**

“The art piece I submitted shows a farmer picking out turnips in Manzanar during the sunset. The actual turnip plant will be replaced with the Manzanar cemetery statue, and it will have roots coming from the bottom of the statue. The roots represent that Japanese American history is in my roots/history. In the field past the farmer, there will be other turnip plants to represent that I will be planting roots in other people by educating them on my experience during Kansha.



“My participation in the workshop ‘Intergenerational Conversations: Ripples of the Past’ was a unique experience as I was able to hear the stories of people from ages 18 to the late 90s. I was even able to talk to someone who was incarcerated, which I was very grateful for.”

**Personal Statement:**

“Since the older generations were told to ignore their issues

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and ignore talking about them, it's difficult for my generation to talk through these issues in a meaningful and thoughtful way. These workshops and programs offered by JACL make it so that Nikkei youths are able to talk to one another as a community. These conversations further educate Nikkei on the effects that incarceration has had on our families.

"This is another draw that JACL provides for Nikkei youth because learning about Japanese incarceration in high school from a history teacher is drastically different from hearing the stories from family members who have experienced the effect of incarceration. For me, the realization that Japanese incarceration still affects my generation is another reason why I'm still involved in JACL."

**LAW**

**JAMIE MORISHIMA**  
**JACL Chapter: SELA-NOCO/Orange County**  
**Recipient of the Thomas T. Hayashi Scholarship**  
*University of California, Irvine, School of Law*



**Notables:**  
 Jamie Morishima first became involved in JACL during the Covid pandemic, when she joined the Young Professionals Caucus, which provided her with a sense of community at a difficult and stressful time. She is grateful for the support she received from her fellow young professionals. This period also sharpened her awareness of anti-Asian hate and other social justice issues and the uncertainty of post-college life. Morishima plans to pursue a career in public interest law.

**Personal Statement:**  
 "I plan to pursue a career in public interest law. As a Japanese American woman growing up in a majority-white suburb in Orange County, I found myself living in a system that rewarded my proximity to whiteness while constantly reminding me it would not be enough."  
 She now realizes that the "model minority" approach that previous generations took no longer works for her and for many young people, who believe that social justice requires a more forward approach to issues of racial and social equality.

"I learned and unlearned an immense amount during this time, and it drastically transformed the way I perceived the world. Growing up, my parents wanted me to accept things for how they were and to 'fit the mold' without causing trouble. I learned conforming and assimilating to an unjust society only exacerbates the problems."  
 "When I discovered how to accept my identity and use my voice to advocate for myself and others, it was extremely powerful. I have spent my postgraduate years discovering how I can incorporate my passions and this new profound way of thinking into action."  
 "During this time, I had to balance supporting myself financially, without the aid of my family, while seeking out opportunities that aligned with my values. I carved my own path, and I found my commitment to social justice

and public interest law.  
 "I believe we as the younger generation do want to assume responsibility for the preservation and longevity of the history, culture and community of Japanese Americans. I think how we choose to do that may be different than prior generations have done so before, however, nonetheless valid. We want to share our communities' stories, both the good and the bad, and learn how to connect them to what is happening in our lives today."  
 "I would like to see the JACL hold more space for the younger generations to do that, and give the youth more leeway in finding out their own way of preservation. Without a doubt, I think new youth members will be interested in JACL if they see youth leadership and youth-led discussions and programs."

"At all levels — local, district and national — JACL should be proactive in organizing community events and activities that target the interests of youths. These can serve as platforms for young individuals to learn more about the JACL and can be the first step into getting more involved and taking on leadership roles. JACL should actively recruit participants from its programs, such as the Kakehashi Project and Leadership Summit. These programs already attract young individuals who have demonstrated interest and involvement in our community."

**STUDENT AID**

**BRUCE ARAO**  
**JACL Chapter: Watsonville-Santa Cruz**  
**Recipient of the Dr. George Goro & Nettie Muramoto Scholarship**  
*University of California, Berkeley*



**Notables:**  
 Bruce Arao has a long history of involvement in the JACL. Most recently, he served as the NCWNP District Resolutions Committee representative, as well as the NCWNP District Website and Social Media chair. He is currently serving as District Youth Board chair and National District Youth delegate. Currently, he is employed as a research scientist with the California Department of Public Health.

**Personal Statement:**  
 "Growing up, my parents would tell me stories about how much fun they had when they were young and surrounded by a vibrant JA community. These stories echoed in my ears as my optimistic side asked, 'What if we created a District Youth Board? What if we could re-create that welcoming JA youth community?'"  
 "Following this optimism, I volunteered to become the first vice chair of the DYB. My first project was to develop the board's constitution to establish our vision, leadership structure and board governance. I drafted an initial constitution that outlined the board's goals and events, and the board approved it."  
 "The DYB's greatest accomplishment was a financial sponsorship program to bring youth to the JACL's 2023 National Convention. After collaborating with other JACL and JA organizations, we

knew the community was welcoming and ready for new youth leaders and ideas. We also knew that there were barriers, both perceived and financial, that prevented many youths from becoming more involved in the community.

"With the upcoming 2023 JACL National Convention set to host numerous workshops and JA leaders, we saw this as the perfect opportunity to welcome new youth. In January 2023, we developed the DYB Sponsorship Program to sponsor youth leaders to attend the 2023 JACL National Convention.

"From my leadership with the DYB, I have learned that the JACL is a welcoming community that is ready for more youth leaders. JACL leaders and other JA organizations are ready to support and mentor the next generation of

leaders. . . . By working in partnership with JACL leadership and other JA organizations, the DYB evolved from an idea into a group that organized multiple events and inspired many youths to become leaders in their community.

"Now, the JACL can continue to recruit youth leaders by creating more opportunities for youth to lead, such as creating District Youth Boards in each JACL district and lowering the barriers to access the community, such as providing scholarships for youth to attend conventions. With the success of Japanese American Youth Alliance and the DYB Sponsorship Program, I believe that youth will volunteer to become leaders once they feel welcomed and recognize the value of the JA community."

**KATIE HILL**  
**JACL Chapter: Chicago**  
**Recipient of the Abe & Esther Hagiwara Scholarship**  
*Graduate College of the University of Oklahoma*



**Notables:**  
 Since receiving her scholarship, Katie Hill has spent a significant portion of her time and energy dedicated to the JACL's Kansha Project. Serving as a Kansha chaperone, she has played a vital role in facilitating this transformative program, connecting young Japanese Americans with their heritage and history.  
 This initiative, organized by the Chicago chapter of JACL, holds

**CONGRATULATIONS JAMIE MORISHIMA**

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**Bruce Arao**

*Awarded National JACL's G & N Muramoto Memorial Scholarship*

*BRUCE ARAO \* KAINU'U GAVIN*

*Awarded Chapter Scholarships:*  
*Louise & Ray Sako Scholarship*  
*Frank Mito Memorial Scholarship*  
*Kee Kitayama Memorial Scholarship*

**Bruce,**

**We are so very proud of you. Congratulations on the scholarship. We hope you have a great time at Berkeley!!**

**Love Mom and Dad**

personal significance to her as a fifth-generation Japanese American (Gosei) seeking to share the stories of her family's wartime experiences. Hill is deeply grateful for the opportunities and support provided by JACL Chicago. The scholarship has not only facilitated her academic journey but also empowered her to make a tangible impact on the communities she serves.

**Personal Statement:**

"My continued involvement with JACL has been a transformative journey that has deeply impacted my personal, educational and professional trajectory. Serving as a Kansha chaperone was a defining moment, allowing me to connect with my Japanese American heritage and contribute to the empowerment of young individuals exploring their cultural identity.

"This experience ignited a passion for preserving our community's stories and fostering a sense of belonging. Engaging in research on the Japanese American incarceration, including a trip to Heart Mountain and participating in the impactful act of stamping the 'Ireicho,' further fueled my commitment to understanding and sharing the untold stories of our community. Witnessing the physical remnants of history and actively participating in preserving these sites emphasized the importance of cultural preservation.

"Inspired by my experiences, I have chosen to pursue an online master's in museum studies through the University of Oklahoma. This academic endeavor

is driven by a desire to contribute to the field of museology, ensuring that the narratives of marginalized communities, particularly Japanese Americans, are accurately represented in historical discourse.

"My goal is to leverage museum studies as a tool for social justice, fostering understanding and empathy through curated exhibitions. Additionally, my involvement in the *Kioku Magazine* publication has provided a platform to amplify the voices of our community.

"As a contributor, I have had the privilege of sharing personal stories and reflections, contributing to the collective memory of Japanese Americans. This experience has reinforced my belief in the power of storytelling as a means of preserving cultural heritage and fostering connection among generations.

"In essence, my continued involvement with JACL has not only shaped my trajectory but has also become an integral part of my identity. It has propelled me toward a career path that aligns with my values of cultural preservation, education and social justice.

"I am committed to leveraging my education in museum studies to contribute meaningfully to the representation of Japanese American history and ensuring that our stories are not only remembered but also learned from for the betterment of future generations. I am grateful for the support of JACL Chicago in empowering me on this impactful journey of self-discovery and community engagement."



**SAN JOSE JACL AWARDS \$25,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS**

Sharon Uyeda (*far left*), San Jose JACL Scholarship Committee chair, is pictured with this year's winners (*from left*) Austin Eng, Evelyn Zhang, Melia Manning, Sienna Rembulat, Avery Wong, Kayla Pham and Misaki Nguyen. (*Not pictured are Madeline Bader and Kazu Kimura.*)

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SAN JOSE JACL

By San Jose JACL Chapter

Nine high school seniors received \$25,000 in scholarships from the JACL San Jose chapter at a luncheon held on May 25 at the Issei Memorial Building backyard garden. The chapter acknowledged the students who were honored for their outstanding academic records, community service and personal statements. The following students were recognized:

- **Madeline Bader** was awarded the \$1,000 Ninja Youth Foundation Scholarship. She is headed to Menlo where she plans to major in business or engineering.
- **Austin Eng**, winner of the \$3,000 Kenji Sakauye Memorial Scholarship and the \$1,000 Henry & Ada Uyeda Memorial Scholarship, plans to attend Foothill College and then transfer to a univer-

sity and major in business.

- **Kazu Kimura** received the \$2,500 Shogo & Chiyo Hikido Memorial Scholarship. He is headed to the University of California, Riverside, as a business major.
- **Melia Manning** was awarded the \$500 San Jose JACL Chapter Award. She will be attending San Jose State University. She intends to major in biomedical engineering.
- **Misaki Nguyen** received the \$1,000 Masuo & Machiko Nakamura Memorial Scholarship and the \$500 Lanette Yoneko Hayakawa Memorial Scholarship. She will be attending the University of California, San Diego, where she plans to major in neurobiology.
- **Kayla Pham** was awarded the \$1,000 Ray & Lucy Matsumoto Business Scholarship. She will be attending the University of the Pacific as a business major.

- **Sienna Rembulat**, winner of the \$500 San Jose JACL Chapter Award, is headed to Oregon State University and is entering undeclared.
- **Avery Wong** received the \$2,500 George Masunaga Endowment Scholarship and the \$2,500 Kaysee Tsuji Memorial Scholarship. She is headed to New York University and will major in Asian American Studies.
- **Evelyn Zhang**, winner of the \$10,000 Oyama Family Foundation Scholarship (\$2,500 for four years), will be attending the University of Chicago as a political science major.

This year's JACL San Jose chapter Scholarship Committee members were Sharon Uyeda (chair), Gary Jio, JoAnn Okabe Kubo and Mitsuru Kumagai. Congratulations to all of the recipients.

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